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ABSTRACT

In addition to helping students revise thoughtfully by placing them in situations where revision matters, advanced composition instructors can use the complementary method of discourse analysis scales. These scales provide advanced writers with ample data for making decisions about revisions, and for identifying relevant semantic, syntactic, and rhetorical features of an assigned discourse. Readers provide descriptive and evaluative information about paired features on continuums which the teacher designs. One advantage of the scales is that they provide a writer with specific and relatively complete information about a particular paper. Scales can be designed to describe particular features that follow from the central aim of a given piece of discourse. The resulting data are more objectively conveyed than teachers' personal responses, such as "You failed to . . .," or "You neglected to . . .." A second advantage of the scales is that they help students read more critically. (The use of discourse analysis scales is illustrated by describing their use in an advanced composition course based on James Kinneavy's theories of discourse. A list of paired features for generating scales is provided on expressive writing, such as personal narrative or autobiography.) (RL)

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Encouraging Thoughtful Revision in a Kinneavy-Framed Advanced Composition Course

In a recent survey of 374 advanced composition instructors, Michael Hogan concludes: "Emphases in the courses appear to be largely traditional and, to a degree, repetitive of those things we do in freshman composition."[1] Hogan's conclusion is surprising because research in composing has led to practices that can make the advanced course truly advanced. I refer, for example, to heuristics, protocol analysis, the discourse matrix method of analyzing textual structure, and sentence-combining. Not all aspects of composing have been examined with equivalent intensity, however, and according to Nancy Sommers, revision lacks even a single theoretical study. At present its "principles" are largely unknown.[2] In the same article, Sommers observes that most basic texts describe revision simplistically as a final "cleaning up" act rather than as part of the on-going composing process.

Though little study may have been given to revision, advanced composition instructors can help students revise thoughtfully by placing them in situations in which revision matters. Students become audiences for each other's writing in small groups, and through supportive response as well as questioning of ambiguities, they are encouraged to re-examine their drafts and revise/rethink before submitting the paper for teacher evaluation. When audience response is successful, students are often motivated to rethink a paper, resulting in the revision of whole sections of it. I would like to describe a complementary method, use of discourse analysis scales, that provides advanced writers with ample data on which to make de-

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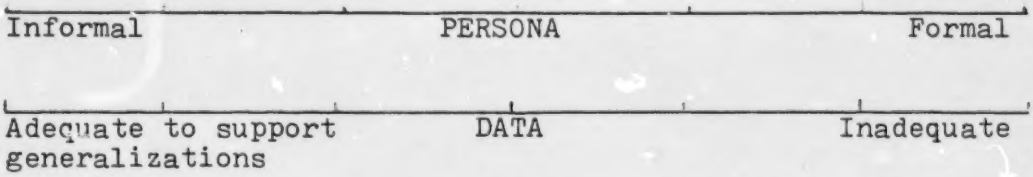
cisions about revision.

Discourse analysis scales identify relevant semantic, syntactic, and rhetorical features of an assigned discourse. Readers provide descriptive and evaluative information about the features on continuums which the teacher designs.[3] For example:



One advantage of the scales is that they provide a writer with specific and relatively complete information about a particular paper. Scales can be designed to describe particular features that follow from the central aim of a given piece of discourse. The resulting data is more objectively conveyed than responses such as "You failed to . . ." or "You neglected to . . ." A second advantage of the scales is that they help students read more critically, at least if my students' perceptions are accurate. Because the scales' role in revision is more evident when viewed in the context of a specific course, I will describe briefly the advanced composition course I currently teach, which is based on theory described in James Kinneavy's A Theory of Discourse.

There are at least three reasons for my decision to use Kinneavy's theory of aims to structure an advanced writing course. First, A Theory of Discourse provides a comprehensive view of writing. A number of advanced students have transferred from one college to another and lack a common freshman English experience: some have written papers in which Ken Macrorie's approach was emphasized, others persuasive essays written on current issues or literature based on Sheridan Baker's keyhole form, and still

others, one and two paragraph papers written in crash courses of basic grammar. Kinneavy provides a comprehensive view of writing by describing four different kinds of discourse, each dependent upon aim: expressive, referential, persuasive, and literary. Second, Kinneavy makes his theory relevant to a variety of readers by identifying examples of discourse that reflect each aim. For instance, as examples of reference discourse he describes the newspaper, magazine, journal article, government and business report, textbook, panel presentation, dialogue, summary, and encyclopedia, among others. This variety reads like a list of majors enrolled in the course - journalists, political scientists, business majors, and scientists - who more often than not understand the aims through examples with which they are familiar. Third, and most important for a course which seeks to view revision as a thoughtful act, Kinneavy analyses the logic of each aim. While reading accounts of logic doesn't enable students to write logically, awareness can make students better readers of the logic of each other's prose, and sometimes, of their own.

Aware of Kinneavy's critics who question his classification of discourse because it is based on analysis of written products rather than on interviews with writers in progress,[4] I nevertheless designed a course which begins with expressive writing and then proceeds to persuasive and reference discourse. Literary discourse is excluded because of the brevity of a one-semester course and the needs of enrollment at Syracuse. While Kinneavy does not consider the complexity of student aims in classroom contexts, I believe instructors can make at least partial allowance for them while still using Kinneavy's framework to guide assignments and course structure. Some intentions can be discovered by question-

ing writers or by observing their writing behavior, and others by careful reading of papers. The rationale for the sequence from two kinds of person discourse to subject discourse is to emphasize for writers the human element of communication, that discourse is generated by one person and is addressed to another. Ideally, interesting-to-read reference discourse results.

Each of seven assignments is accompanied by a different discourse analysis scale, which details the particular features of the assigned discourse, arranged according to the logic, organization, and style of each aim. They are completed by peer readers, the writer, and teacher. The scales, which in class I call reader response sheets, are alike in a number of ways. They begin by asking writers to identify any circumstances or special intentions they had in writing that might influence readers. The continuums for each feature follow and request additional specific information of readers. For example:

Informal — PERSONA — Formal

What are the informal and formal elements?

Adequate data to support generalizations — DATA — Inadequate

What additional data, if any, would strengthen the generalizations?

Explicit or implied — PATTERNS OF ORGANIZATION — Not explicit or implied

Identify the patterns. Could they be made more distinct without sacrificing the writer's intentions?

Satisfied — AUDIENCE NEEDS — Ignored

Who is the audience? What are their needs?

After readers complete the scales, they are asked two questions designed to synthesize their responses: (1) What is the chief strength of the paper? and (2) What aspect of the paper needs revision the most? In case readers have an additional response or a personal comment to make, space is provided.

The main differences in each aim's scales stem from the aim's distinguishing features. The differences (and overlappings) can be seen in the following paired features, which are used to mark scale ends in three course assignments:

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Expressive language comes naturally to most students and involves them immediately since they themselves are the subjects of their journals, autobiographies, and free writing. The expressive scales immediately direct attention to the writer's persona, then to logic and organization. Under persona, the self the writer creates and the language used in creating it are considered. Scales also include two kinds of expressive logic which Kinneavy identifies, emotive and conceptual. Kinneavy writes, "[W]hatever thought processes are going on in the expressive components of discourse or in discourse which is predominantly expressive, they should not be reduced to a simply conceptual or simply emotive component. The logic of expressive discourse must embody some emotional and some intellectual components. . ."[5]

A bridge to persuasive writing is then provided by a letter of application and resume assignment; both the creation of a self and the satisfaction of an audience's needs are crucial here. Additional correspondence (good news, decline, and persuasive request situations) keeps emphasis on audience and is followed by an assign-

EXPRESSIVE (Personal narrative or autobiography)

Style
Persona
.central/peripheral
.informal/formal
.optimistic/pessimistic
.seems authentic/unauthentic
.aware/ unaware of audience
Language
.idiolect/standard
.connotative/denotative
.frequent/infrequent use of images
.1st/3rd person pronouns
.frequent/infrequent use of superlative adjectives and adverbs
Logic
Apparent/not apparent
Predominance of intuitive or associative logic/induction or deduction
Emotionally valued goal evident/ not evident
Organization
Patterns apparent/not apparent

REFERENCE (Scientific proving of an hypothesis)

Logic
Predominance of intuitive or associative logic/induction or deduction
Induction
.adequate/inadequate amount of data to support generalizations
.relevant/irrelevant variety of data
.adequate/inadequate randomness of sampling
Deduction
.logical/illogical
Organization
Patterns apparent/not apparent
Adequate/inadequate handling of features of basic scientific form
Style
Appropriate/inappropriate persona
Satisfies/ignores audience needs
Loose/periodic sentences
Jargon clarifies/obscures
Compressed/wordy technique
Concrete/abstract diction
Denotative/connotative meaning
3rd/1st person pronouns
Correct/incorrect usage

PERSUASIVE (Controversial issue in writer's discipline)

Logic
Ethical appeal (persona)
.satisfies/ignores audience needs
.shows good will/antagonistic
.knowledgeable/ignorant of subject
.trustworthy/untrustworthy
.formal/informal
.seems authentic/unauthentic
Emotional appeal
.predominance of intuitive or associative logic/induction or deduction
.deduction: conclusions follow/ don't follow premises
.induction: conclusions established adequately/inadequately from data
.fallacy-free/faulty (overall)
.seems plausible/implausible
Organization
Patterns apparent/not apparent
Effective/ineffective handling of features of traditional or Rogerian form
Style
Natural/contrived diction
Clear/ambiguous language
Concrete/abstract language
Vivid/trite figures
Suitable/unsuitable readability index
Correct/incorrect usage

ment in which writers persuade a general audience to accept their views of a controversial issue in their disciplines. The latter assignment bridges reference discourse since it requires subject awareness and strategies as well as careful audience analysis.The persuasive scales, through the ethical appeal, focus initially on the persona's awareness and satisfaction of audience needs, then on the persona itself. Logic and organization are more fully developed than in expressive writing with attention directed to both emotive and conceptual logic, but primarily to induction and deduction. Specific patterns of traditional and Rogerian persuasion are identified in addition to the patterns of organization described in expressive discourse.

Finally, reference discourse follows with a proposal in which writers identify their intentions for a final writing project, most often a formal report or journal article, followed by a three-art assignment: (1) exploration of a problem whose importance they define, (2) identification and clear conveyance of information needed in the problem's solution, and (3) scientific proving of an hypothesis that helps solve the problem. The scientific discourse scales begin by asking readers to characterize overall logic, then the features of induction and deduction in particular. Features of organization include the basic patterns as well as scientific form. Last, persona and audience needs are considered, in less detail than in expressive and persuasive writing.

Over the past two semesters the scales have encouraged more writers to revise than in previous semesters, and I have been more satisfied with revisions. Students like them because they

pinpoint problem areas on which writers can profitably concentrate. I like them because while they don't appear to deter writers from drafting entirely new papers (in fact, I've seen more total revision in the past two semesters than in others), they often encourage revision of specific problem areas rather than superficial and indiscriminate revision of an entire draft. Many students also feel they are better readers of prose after the course. Last summer's students averaged a 4.3 rating on a scale of 1 to 5 where 5 is the most positive response to the question, "To what extent did the course help you become a more critical reader of prose?"

Quite honestly, the scales help me read and respond fully to each paper. I read student response to the scales as I complete my copy and note agreements. When I see differences, I try to explain my reading.

If teachers lack sufficient knowledge to teach principles of revision directly, we can at least provide advanced writers with a context in which revision might occur and give informed responses to their writing. Discourse analysis scales are one way of providing these responses, and Kinneavy's A Theory of Discourse, one source for determining specific features of discourse assigned.

NOTES

[1] Michael P. Hogan, "Advanced Composition: A Survey," Journal of Advanced Composition, 1 (Spring, 1980), 28.

[2] References are to Nancy Sommers, "The Need for Theory in Composition Research," CCC, 30 (Feb., 1979), 48. See also a forthcoming article in the December issue of CCC.

[3] I learned of the scale concept from Catherine Hendricks, University of Washington, Seattle, in her presentation at the 1980 C[illegible] "Alternatives to Red Ink: The Use of Structured Peer Evaluation and Topic-Specific Semantic Differential Scales to Provide Students with Detailed Responses to Their Work."

[4] See C. H. Knoblauch, "Intentionality in the Writing Process: A Case Study," CCC, 31 (May, 1980), 154 and Lee Odell, "Teachers of Composition and Needed Research in Discourse Theory," CCC, 30 (Feb., 1979), 39-40.

[5] James Kinneavy, A Theory of Discourse (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 1980), p. 421.